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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000158

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: GOAM UNVEILS ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY WITH
PUBLIC FANFARE

REF: 03 YEREVAN 02355

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive But Unclassified. Please treat
accordingly.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (SBU) Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Markarian
unveiled the GOAM's first anti-corruption strategy
Jaunary 16 during a public hearing that included an
impressive array of ministers, legislators and
international observers. Disparate parts of the
GOAM put on a united public face during the meeting,
with the exception of the opposition parties who
were noticeably absent from the event. The meeting
featured congratulatory speeches by high-level GOAM
officials who touted the strategy as vital to
Armenia's economic development and claimed it
represented a totally collaborative effort with the
help of the donor community. Transparency
International's strong criticism of the document
elicited applause from local NGOs. End summary.

GOAM WHO'S-WHO UNVEILS NEW STRATEGY

[1](#)3. (SBU) Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Markarian
unveiled the GOAM's first anti-corruption strategy
Jaunary 16 during a public hearing that included an
impressive array of ministers, legislators,
international observers and NGOs. A high-level
media splash was followed by a series of technical
"roundtables" on various aspects of the plan's
implementation. Well over half of Armenia's cabinet
level officials attended the meeting in a display of
GOAM support for the new plan. Traditionally
disparate elements of the GOAM put on a united
public face during the meeting. The most notable
exception was the opposition Justice Bloc, whose
representatives were noticeably absent. Republican
Party parliamentarian Vazgen Khachikyan dismissed
their absence as "insignificant," adding that
"everyone who matters supports this plan."

[1](#)4. (SBU) The meeting featured congratulatory
speeches by high-level GOAM officials who touted the
strategy as a vital part of Armenia's economic
development. Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian said
the strategy was designed to send a message of "zero
tolerance for corruption" to the international
community. Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy
Tigran Khachatryan said the strategy was
inextricably linked to the GOAM's poverty reduction
strategy adopted in late 2003 (reftel). National
Assembly Deputy Speaker Tigran Torosyan's remarks
made numerous references to the "high level of
cooperation with the donor community" in creating
the strategy.

STRONG CRITICISM FROM TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

[1](#)5. (U) Transparency International (TI) offered the
strongest criticism of the document during the
meeting, eliciting applause from local NGOs. Local
TI office representative Amalia Kostanyan said the
plan failed to address corruption in the military
and with respect to the use of environmental
resources. She criticized the GOAM for not fully
engaging the donor community during every step of
the creation of the plan and said there was an
overall lack of political will on the part of GOAM

officials to cooperate with outside partners on the problem of corruption.

COMMENT

15. (SBU) The January 16 meeting was clearly designed to lend the greatest possible level of legitimacy to the new plan despite earlier criticism on various technical aspects by international observers. This criticism centered on the strategy's lack of focus and an overly ambitious list of "priority areas" that watered down otherwise important objectives. Despite comments made by GOAM officials for the benefit of the press, the donor community did not have a chance to comment on the most recent draft of the strategy prior to its release. USG officials went on record at the most recent U.S.-Armenia Task Force meetings in November 2003 stating their disappointment at the lack of transparency during this last phase of the drafting process. OSCE representatives commented during the January 16 meeting that the donor community, while committed in principle to assisting Armenia with its anti-corruption efforts, would need to closely examine the strategy before it could commit resources for specific programs.

RICHTER